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1905

❖ Ol' Stampin' Grounds and Other Poems ❖

Howard Dwight Smiley



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MY OL' SHACK, GULL LAKE 'AN' ME

Ol' Stampin' Grounds
and Other Poems

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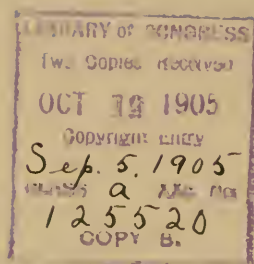
BY

HOWARD DWIGHT SMILEY



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To
MY MOTHER

Concerning Mr. Smiley

Among men of the pen there are certain parallels bound to impress even the most superficial observer. The work of the late Ben King, of St. Joseph, in many ways suggests the work of Howard Smiley, of Marshall and Gull lake.

Mr. King was an older man than Mr. Smiley, but throughout the verse of each of them runs a thread of humor, of genial optimism, of tender and homely sentiment. For them, "the hills were dearest which their childish feet had climbed the earliest," and the local muse inspired many of their best efforts. For them, too, the Book of Nature proved a cherished volume, and what they have had to say has less to do with the sedentary life than with life in the open—the keen, throbbing existence of the Great Out-Doors, where inspiration comes at first hand.

And what Opie Read so touchingly says of Ben King may not inappropriately be said of Howard Smiley: "How odd a boy he was—no one understood him. On the edge of a marsh he would sit during hours at a time, under the spell of the

weird music amid the rushes. As he grew up, lacking the instincts that make men successful in business, he was pronounced a failure—not by those who had warmed themselves in the glow of his poetic nature, but by the man who believed that to turn over a dime and thereby make a dollar out of it, was the most gracious faculty that could be bestowed upon a member of the human family.”

From an article in *The Detroit Evening News* of May 21, 1903,—an appreciative article that made Mr. Smiley many friends—the following is quoted:

“Howard Dwight Smiley, of Marshall, is destined to make his mark in the literary world. To summer resorters familiar with Gull lake the ‘Wizard of the Shack’ is no stranger, and his many friends in southern Michigan will regret that he may not be able to keep open house this season on account of a badly crushed foot, which confines him to his hotel in St. Louis, Mo.

“Mr. Smiley was born in Marshall, September 1, 1877, being the son of Hon. James F. Smiley, a prominent physician and republican politician. When but three years old he suffered the partial loss of his sense of hearing as the result of a severe attack of scarlet fever. As a boy of five he entered the ‘west ward’ school and for ten years kept the teachers busy. He balked at the high school because as he puts it, ‘it would have necessitated my climbing three flights of stairs three times a day for three years—too much work.’ During ’93 and ’94 he attended Olivet college and in ’97 and ’98 was a member of the Art Students’ League of New York city.

“On Christmas day, 1898, Howard lost his mother. Being released from her restraining influence and possessed of quite a sum of insurance money, he, in company with Burdette F. Grant—son of Dr. A. B. Grant, of Albion,—went into Ontonogan county to take up a homesteader’s claim. It was there, in the solitary pine woods, that Smiley wrote his first poem. Early in October, 1899, while

alone in the woods, forty miles from Houghton, he was advised by wire of the sudden death of his father. Young Grant, then a student in the Houghton School of Mines, had risked expulsion and ridden out with the message. They were delaying the funeral for him, so mounting Grant's tired horse, the boy started out for Houghton. The horse fell three times on the road, and Grant, on foot, reached the city first. Without rest Smiley made the long trip down through Wisconsin to Chicago and home over the Michigan Central, arriving too late for the funeral.

"It was a sad home-coming for the boy, left almost alone in the world, and, while still in a dazed condition, he was rushed to the court house where he read and accepted his father's strange will, without realizing its meaning. But time and rest brought regrets when too late—the will had been probated and Howard will get his share when thirty-five years of age, if the other heirs think proper.

"Realizing that he was nearly on his uppers, young Smiley, after a period spent in the mining towns of the upper peninsula, returned to Gull lake and took up his abode in the boat house built for the Smiley cottage. This little house has since been his summer home and is known to all his friends as 'The Shack.'

"Howard's deafness has seemingly magnified his other senses—he is extremely observing and is a great student of animal and bird life as evidenced by many of his writings. One of his best compositions, 'The House Next Door,' was written during a brief stay in Marshall, after an absence of a year or more. The poem was published some time ago in *The Marshall Statesman* and attracted much attention, coupled with predictions of a brilliant career in the field of letters. A later production, 'Evans An' Me An' Cronin,' bears out these predictions and will bring smiles to all of Howard's acquaintances. * * * Young Smiley paints most accurate word pictures in all his reminiscent verse, and there is a wonderful depth of feeling expressed in their homely simplicity. People who know Gull lake will appreciate his 'Springtime Ruminations' and 'Back Again,' while those about Marshall will immediately recognize 'The Ol' Stampin' Grounds.'"

That Mr. Smiley's best work—and this little volume contains many examples of it—is prodigal in promise of things to come, there is no gain-

saying. There are verses here that are little gems in their way—touches of humor and sentiment that are certain to cling to the mind and rise often to the lip. While the Wizard of the Shack may do even better in years to come, and take an honored place beside Carleton and Riley and other poets of the middle west, his present book will not be laid aside without a fervent “well done!” from the reader. The scenes he knows and loves he has wrought into his verse with no uncertain hand.

*“His heart was in his work, and the heart
Giveth grace unto every art.”*

WILLIAM WALLACE COOK.



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Ol' Stampin' Grounds

The ol' bridge stands where the ol' bridge stood,
An' the ol' mill's still in the neighborhood,
With the same ol' roars an' the same ol' clanks,
An' the same ol' wheel an' the same ol' planks,
A little bit moss-grown, I'll admit;
An' the ol' beam's gone, where we uster sit
An' fish fer dace, in the warm June sun,
An' fer suckers, too—when the suckers run.

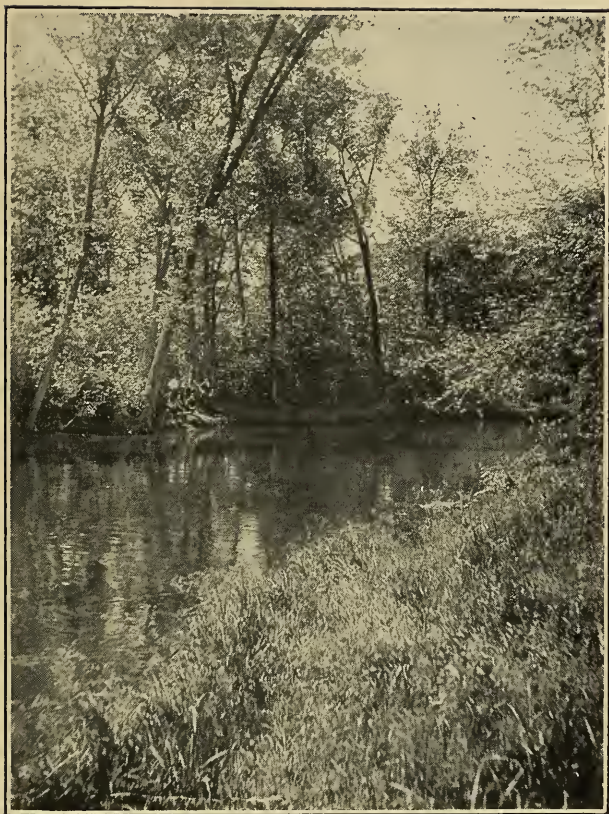
The ol' path winds where the ol' path wound,
An' the same ol' trees still stand around,
With the same ol' apples, and' the same old shade,
An' the same old spring 'at Davis made.
What 'pears to be the same ol' cow
Is pastured out in the wood-lot now;
An' the same ol' hole's in the same ol' fence
Where I 'member wunst I found fi' cents.

The ol' bank runs where the ol' bank ran,
An' some o' the same ol' landmarks stan',
With the same ol' log an' the same old stone,
An' the same ol' stump all mossy grown.
An' yet, somehow, it do appear
'At somethin' er other is missin' here.
Why, yes—what's come o' the big "ol' tree"
And the boys that went barefoot with me.

I wonder where "Punk" Mor'son is,
An' "Bony" Bryant, too?
An' all the rest o' that ol' gang
'At played with me an' you.
Where's "Spot" Stultz an' "Fatty" gone
An' "Mud," an' "Bill," and "Lou?"
An' while I'm lookin' 'round—why, say,
Now what's become o' you?

There ain't much change come o'er the place,
Except the vanished boyish face
O' the little chap 'at swum 'round here
In the long ago o' a vanished year.
Don't seem no more than yesterday
Since all us fellers used to play
An' swim 'round here—it sure do seem
I should find you all along this stream.

Gently the river glides along,
Singin' it's never endin' song,
Singin' its song o' leafy bowers,
Deep still woods, an' sweet wild flowers.
Singin' to me, an' singin' to you
The ol' sweet song o' the Kal-a-ma-zoo,
Singin' to me, an' singin' to you
The story o' what we uster do.



THE "OL' TREE" SWIMMIN' HOLE

As deeper grows the sunset skies,
Slowly the mist begins to rise;
An' hangs like a curtain o'er the stream,
An' pictures the scene o' a long past dream,
Fer settin' here with half-closed eyes
I kin hear the splashes an' joyous cries
Come echoin' back from that long ago
When you an' I were youngsters, Joe.

The House Next Door

I've been visitin' down to Mollie's
In that new house o' hers
She built upon the site o' where
The ol' barn stood for years;
An' it covers up the play ground
So it's thirty feet, not more,
Between her bedroom winder
An' the house next door.

A kind o' reminiscence comes
A-creepin' over me
When I'm settin' at her winder
An' lookin' out. I see
Them two ol' yeller porches
With the ivy creepin' o'er,
An' a general kind o' side view
O' the house next door.

House next door, to most folks,
Don't mean so very much;
P'rhaps a friendly neighbor,
Er playmate, er some such.
With me it's somewhat diff'rent,
An' it means a little more—
S'pose it's jest 'cause I was born
In the house next door.

'Twas there I learned life's lessons,
Word by word was taught to talk,
An' I can jest remember
When I first begun to walk,
When I'd take two steps an' tumble
An' go rollin' 'cross the floor—
In my little babyhood days
In the house next door.

Wisht instead o' settin' here,
A-tryin' to write a rhyme,
'At I was back on that ol' bench
'Long 'bout dinner time—
Talkin' there with Billy
Out in front of Billy's store—
'N hear ma whistle "dinner"
From the house next door.

'Twould take a heap o' talkin'
To tell o' all, I've done
A-playin' 'round in that ol' house—
The troubles an' the fun—
But each succeedin' year shall make
Me love em more an' more,
Them tender recollections
O' the house next door.

Sah

That ol' house where I wuz born,
With a mother's love an' sister's scorn,
An' father's kind o' mixed up like,
Tho' I believe he loved me a great big sight
More'n he hated me, cuz it's plain's can be,
There wuz never a better' father'n he.
An' there's where I spent so many years,
Chuck full o' joy all mixt with tears,
An' there's where I knew the one—'cept ma—
'At loved me the best o' all, that's Sah.

That little room, right next to hers,
When she lived with us in by-gone years,
Where she'd put me to bed an' tuck me in,
My! how I wish she could do it agin;
Fer she'd tuck me in so slick an' warm
At' th' coldest colds cudn't do no harm.
If she'd tuck me in t'night I believe
I'd stay right there jest's long 's I live;
For there wuzn't a soul in the world—'cept ma—
'At could tuck a feller in like Sah.

An' that ol' barn 'at uster be
A reg'lar paradise ter me,
Where ev'ry night, right after school
(An' th' ol' coal box 'ud be th' gool)
We'd play hide an' coop, in an' about;

When long she'd come, an' up an' shout
"See here young man, I think you're able
T' pitch right in an' clean out this stable."
Fer there wuzn't a soul in the worl'—'cept ma—
'At could make a feller work like Sah.

An' that ol' yard where I uster play
An' idle th' hours day by day,
Under them two ol' apple trees
With their tiny fruit an' honey bees!
An' one winter when I wuz 'bout two feet tall,
I 'member I rolled a big snow ball,
An' lot o' little ones, an' when she come, I'd
Frow some at her, nen run an' hide.
But she'd pull me out like a brindle calf.
An' nen we'd set an' laff, an' laff,
Fer there wuzn't a soul in the worl'—'cept ma—
'At could make a feller laff like Sah.

An' some days when I'd be loafin' round
Making mud pies out on the ground
Er swingin' 'neath them apple trees
Er bottlin' up big bumble-bees,
'Long she'd come an' up an' say:
"See here, young man, today's Sunday,
You dress right up an' trot along
To Sunday school, where you belong."
Fer there wuzn't a soul in the worl'—'cept ma—
'At could make a feller be good like Sah.

Nen other days when I'd be mad
An' frow things 'round, an' act real bad,
An' tell th' folks how mean they were,
An' how they wouldn't let me stir,
An' I wouldn't have nothin' 'tall explained,
Nen she'd say: "Young man, y' shud be ashamed
To act like that; if you don't do right
I'll wallop you clean outer sight."
Fer there wuzn't a soul—not even ma—
'At could make a feller mind like Sah.

That ol' church where they uster hold
Auctions, 'member when they sold
Me that shoe bag an' made ma mad,
So she spanked me good, an' sent me to bed,
An' I cried, an' cried like everything?
Nen in she'd come an' set an' sing
An' laff, an' talk, an' say "boo-hoo"
Jest to mock me; nen I'd laff too,
Fer there wuzn't a soul in the worl—'cept ma—
'At could cheer a feller up like Sah.

That ol' grave yard up on the hill,
Where all is beautiful, quiet an' still,
An' th' birds, an' th' flow'rs cover th' ground,
An' most trees are green th' year around,
Where brother Robbie is laid away,

An' Ruthey an' Katie, an' Dave's Charley,
An' all o' my folks, an' her folks too,
Tell ye what I hope they'll do—
'At they'll dig two graves near pa an' ma,
By an' by, fer me an' Sah.

Wouldn't We Joe

Us two'd hike out when the first snow flew,
Wouldn't we, Joe? Me and you,
An' Tim an' Lize, and Fritz 'ud whine
An' ol' Jumbo 'd tail on behin'—
Wise ol' purp, Jum, wasn't he Joe?
Wa'n't worth knowin' what he didn't know;
An wouldn't them hounds make th' rabbits go
'Round th' ol' south marshes, wouldn't they, Joe?

“Over South” was th' place where the rabbits
romped,
Wasn't it, Joe? Them grounds we stomped
Back in th' days o' long ago—
Th' bestest days—wasn't they, Joe?
When Tim hit th' trail o' a cotton tail,
An' 'ud tell us so with a long drawn wail
“Ou-o-o- ou-o-o-o- ou-o-o-o,”—so,
Make your heart beat quick,—wouldn't it Joe?

Then Lize 'an Fritz 'ud join in,
Wouldn't they Joe? An' howl like sin
Hot on th' trail o' that cotton tail,
With noses an' eyes that couldn't fail.
An' then bimeby with a jump an' a rush
Out he'd pop from th' alder brush
An' then—ker bang!—'ud go your gun,
Wouldn't it Joe?—an' wasn't it fun.

Then we'd hike home again, me an' you
Wouldn't we Joe? An' th' rabbit stew
'At your ma 'ud cook, like your ol' ma could,
With dumplins in it—wasn't it good?
An' how I'd eat—An' so would you,
An' Sprint—he'd eat enough fer two,
An' yer ma 'ud smile, it 'ud tickle her so
T' see us a eatin'—wouldn't it Joe?

Wish we was back there—me an' you,
Stompin' around th' Kalamazoo—
Great ol' river, wasn't she Joe?
Wan't much about it we didn't know.
If we could git back there, you an' me,
An' jest be boys like we uster be
'Round them ol' stompin' grounds we uster know,
We'd stay there forever,—wouldn't we Joe?

Larry's Party

Wunst Larry Wright give a party,
When he lived on the hill;
'Twas in the old times, long ago,
When we was little still;
An' I've most, almost, forgotted
All the little girls an' boys
That come to that air party
An' helped to make a noise.

But I can still remember tho'
O' how we all took sticks,
An' lined t'gether in a row
(Soldier folks, we thinks);
An' how we all marched 'crost the road
T' Lacy's home, an' then,
O' how we all o' us turned 'round
An' all marched back again.

An' I can sure remember
All them cakes—they was a dream!—
An' fruit, an' chicken salad,
An' red an' white ice cream!
An' Paul Erb frowed a biscuit
An' hit me in the eye,
An' nen Mis' Wright she jollied me
An' wouldn't let me cry.

An' after that we played an' played,
An' nen we played some more,
Kicked up our heels an' squeeled
An' rolled around the floor;
Nen by'nby, Mis' Wright she says
How glad she was we come,
An' nen we all put on our hats,
An' nen we all marched home.

Wuzn't them the bestest times,
Them times o' long ago?
Wuzn't them the bestest friends,
Them friends we useter know?
I wish that I could go clean back
To that afternoon an' night,
An' have that party over
That wuz give by Larry Wright.

Wonderin'

Me, an' Pa, an' Ma, an' Mollie,
Sah, an' Emma with us, too,
Drove out to the cemetery—
Went to bury Orlando.
Stood beside the grave an' waited
While the parson read the text,
Stood beside the grave an' wondered
Which of us would be the next.

Me, an' Pa, an' Sah, an' Mollie
Stood together by the bed,
Eyes a-streamin', hearts a-achin'—
Little Mother lay there dead.
Three days later, at th' fun'ral,
While the parson read the text,
Stood beside the grave an' wondered
Which of us would be the next.

Me, alone, up in the North woods,
Settin' 'round with heart like lead,
Grant had jest brought out the message—
Telegram that Pa was dead.
Hurried home an' caught th' fun'ral,
An' as the parson read the text,
Stood beside the grave an' wondered
Which of us would be the next.

Me an' Mollie, one Spring mornin',
Walked out to the little lot,
Sat down by the graves an' rested,
Jest us two; an' then I thought,
In time they'll be another fun'ral,
An' as the parson reads the text,
'Twon't take a powerful heap o' guessin'
T' tell whose turn is comin' next.

Spring O' Year

Spring is here, an' it's a seemin'
Like it's time to git to dreamin';
See that same ol' sun a beamin'
With his face chuck full o' cheer?

Ducks and geese are all a-flyin',
Robins chirpin', peewees cryin';
What's the use to think o' dyin'
At this happy time o' year?

Now's the time o' April showers,
April breezes, April flowers;
Sunny days an' happy hours,
Cheer in everythin' you see.

Trees are leafin', daisies springin',
Every bird is busy singin',
All the world with joy's a'ringin'—
Spring o' year's th' time for me.

The Ol' Familiar Town

I don't reckon that you people
Who stay home the year aroun',
Are a-notin' o' the changes
In the ol' familiar town,
Like me who jest drops in there
Fer a minute now and then,
An' takes a hasty look aroun'
An' then hikes out again.

Altho' I ain't a kicker yet.
I'm some constrained ter say
That I wasn't much impressed
By what I saw the other day.
One side o' Main street all ripped up
An' full o' stones an' sticks,
An' the other side all nicely paved
With big, red pavin' bricks.

An' right down through the middle
O' that wide ol' sleepy street,
The electric cars was runnin'—
Why, I never saw the beat!
To think o' Marshall actin' up
Jest like a great big city,
With all them high falutin' airs—
It's jest a mortal pity.

I noticed how the oprey house
Stood on the ol' location,
An' how the same ol' fellers was
A-hangin' 'round the station.
There was Sol McNames an' Billy Holmes
An' Andy Harrigan,
An' ol' Lafe Cole an' Jim Fahey—
But I missed ol' Pokey Dan.

I noticed 'mongst th' others
That Gran'pa Shoop was there;
But I couldn't see Dick Butler
Er John Powell anywhere.
And there was lots of others
Of the ol' boys that I missed,
But it made me sort o' glad ter see
Tom Wright still on th' list.

He come along an' shook my hand
An' passed the time o' day,
An' handed me a big slice o'
That smile that's there to stay.
Tom's a justice now, you know,
An' by ginger! I declare
That him an' lawyer Eddie
Makes a purty foxy pair.

Tom, he writes the warrants up
An' John Bean runs 'em in,
An' Den'son takes th' pris'ner's part
An' argifies fer him.
An' so betwixt the three o' them,
The other feller, he's——well——
“That's the way the money goes,
Pop goes the weasel.”

They've got a bran' new school house
An' a new ol' ladies' home,
Which they say was somewhat damaged
By a recent big cyclone.
An' they got a bran' new depot
Where the street cars comes an' goes,
An' I noticed Hoppy Hagan's
Got a bran' new suit o' clothes.

Yes, ol' Marshall's sure a-boomin',
She's sure a-flyin' high.
I guess she'll beat Chicago
If she keeps on—bye an' bye.
But I guess before she does it
She'll have ter jest arouse
Herself, an' sort o' hump aroun'
An' build a oprey house.

Round the Ol' Kazoo

I've been wandering over the ol' grounds, Joe,
An' over the paths we used to know
So well in the days when we were boys
And knew the pleasure o' youthful joys.
I strolled out the old elm shaded street,
To where the town and the country meet
At the iron bridge, it stands there still—
And what do you think 'bout Cleveland's mill?

They've taken the ol' wheel out where we
Used to set an' fish, and Kite Holmes he
Fell off'n it once, remember that?
An' how Mud Belcher chased his hat
Clear to the ol' tree swimmin' hole
An' fished it out with his fishin' pole,
An' I laughed so hard I cried, an' you—
You laughed so hard you fell in, too.

I wandered over to Davis's wood,
That is, the place where the ol' wood stood,
(Most of the trees are chopped down now),
An' the ol' split maple—'member how
That time that Eddie Klugman clim'
Up, an' got caught on a limb
By the seat o' his pants, 'n me 'n you
Laughed till we was black and blue?



CLEVELAND'S MILL

By the ol' tree swimmin' hole I passed—
My, but it's changed since I saw it last!
The ol' bank's almost washed away
An' the ol' stump's gone.—Remember th' day
That we tied Dad Walburn's shirt an' socks,
And he got so mad that he heaved rocks
At us, an' we all yelled "Chaw beef,"
When he tried to untie 'em with his teeth?

Wouldn't you like to get back here, Joe?
Along with the gang that you uster know,
And have Sprint Townsend with us too,
An' do the things that we used to do?
If you would, then why don't you take a hint
An' come along down here, you an' Sprint.
You won't find everything here you knew,
But you'll find me an' th' ol' Kazoo.

Long in June

Bees air buzzin' in th' clover,
Medder larks air singin' 'roun',
Shop's closed up, an' things air sort o'
Sultry like aroun' th' town.
Took my pole an' went a hikin'
Out along the Rice Creek stream,
Stretched out where th' leaves air thickest
Ter set an' dream.

Heard a gol darn red head peckin'
Way off yonder in th' wood,
Heard a little brown thrush singin',
Golly! but it sounded good.
'Less you've worked th' hull blame winter,
You don't know how good it seem'
Jest ter git out in th' bush
An' set an' dream.

Had a bite an' didn't know it,
Watchin' that blame red squirrel play,
Wished that I could go a scootin'
Through th' branches that-a-way.
Wish the blame ol' mill 'u'd burn
Or they'd bust their darn machine
An' I could stay right here all summer
An' set an' dream.

The Ol' Town

Alluz asleep. Alluz asleep.
I go away, an' out in th' worl',
I find everything in a roar an' a whirl,
A-bangin' an' slammin',
A rippin' an' rammin'
A-shovin' an' pushin',
An' tearin' an' crushin'—
But when I get back t' th' ol' town its
Alluz asleep. Alluz asleep.

Peaceful an' still. Peaceful an' still.
Out in th' worl' they's a roar an' a howl,
Rumble an' grumble, an' snarl an' growl,
Never an end t' th' wrastle an' fight,
Never a rest from morn' till night—
But when I get back t' th' ol' town its
Peaceful an' still. Peaceful an' still.

Quiet an' dead. Quiet an' dead.
Outside th' worl' is chuck full o' life,
Th' songs an' th' shouts of th' gay an' th' blithe,
A-whoopin' an' runnin'
An' troopin' an' funnin',
A-jumpin' an' prancin'
An' jiggin' an' dancin'—
But when I get back t' th' ol' town its
Quiet an' dead. Quiet an' dead.

Back Hum

I sometimes get ter thinkin'
When the autumn days have come,
An' the leaves are turnin' yeller,
That I'd like ter get back hum.
Back to that old dreamy town
That I left years ago,
Back among old mem'ries,
And the boys I used ter know.

Lawsy! when I think about
Them good old days gone by,
I get so blessed hum sick
That I almost wanter cry.
I try to keep on laughin'
An' not be sour an' glum,
But I jest can't help a thinkin'
That I'd like ter get back hum.

I get so blessed sick o' this
Blame prairie, makes me swear.
Nary tree er bird er
Sheet o' water anywhere.
Jest this blame land stretchin' off
It seems ter kingdom come,
An' burnin' up, an' blame it all
I wanter git back hum.

There's a powerful lot o' sentiment
An' truth, in "Hum Sweet Hum,"
And it don't take much ter find it out
Er git you thinkin' some.
And sometimes when you're lonesome,
An' th' hull world's out o' plumb,
You'll catch yourself a wishin'
That you'd like ter git back hum.

A Modern Rip Van Winkle

This is a story of long ago,
But wholly true, as the records show;
A tale of a century, passed away,
Lost to memory, gone to decay.
I was a lad of youth sublime
Back in that olden, golden time.
Never a worry or care I had—
Ha! I was a blithesome, happy lad,
Living at ease in the old, old town,
Chasing the butterflies up and down;
Over the meadows I romped and ran—
Naught I cared for the toils of man;
Sought but the pleasures that life can give,
Asked naught, but to do my way and live.

Thus, one glorious summer day,
I was whiling the hours away,
Down by the singing river's brink,
Where I often went to lie and think,
There in the forest shade alone,
And dream the dreams that were all my own.

Thus, as I lay 'neath the willow tree,
A woman came and sat by me—
A woman? No! a hideous hag
Clothed in a dirty, tattered rag;

Toothless, grisly, gaunt and grim,
With eyes that were watery, red and dim!
Naught she spoke but sat her there,
And watched with a horrible, gloating stare,
'Till at last I cried from very fear,
"Woman, begone! What want you here?
Why do you come to this quiet place
To break my dreams with your hideous face?
Get you gone, you ugly shrew,
I want nothing to do with you."

Then the creature laughed a devilish squal,
That made my very marrow crawl,
And ogled and glowered and laughed again,
'Til the murmuring echoes took up the strain
And rattled it down through the wooded dell,
'Til methought and answer laughed back from hell.
"What want ye here?" once more I cried,
And then the jibbering wretch replied,
"Son," she said, "it amuses me
So surly and peevish a youth to see.
What ails ye, lad, that ye seem to be
So little pleased with my company?
Forsooth, ye've no cause for alarm,
I come not here to do you harm,
But only to chat a quiet hour
With you here in this shady bower,
And permitting me, if you would—
Perchance I might do you some good.

For what cause then do ye rant and rage?
My son, can ye not respect old age?"
"Well, then," said I, "who might you be?
And what great good would you do me?
If talk you must, come, say your say,
But finish soon and go your way.
I come not here to this quiet stream
To talk, I come to dream, to dream!"

"To dream of what, my lad?" asked she,
Perchance that's where my help will be."
"Good!" I cried, "do you deal in dreams?
From your looks, you are a witch, it seems.
Then kindly work your spell on me
And realize this fantasy
That has harassed me thro' all these years,
Plunging me first in hope then tears,
Seeming so near and yet so far—
But first, please tell me who you are."

She said "Would ye know me then, my man?
I am the ruler of a world-wide clan,
A people, who know no nation's rule,
No nation's law, no nation's school.
Look to the north and the south," she said,
"Look to that west where the sun sets red,
Look to the east, through all these lands
You'll find them scattered, the gypsy bands,

And all of them know me as their queen,
For I am the queen, I am Lucene.
Tell me wherein your trouble lies,
Tell me this dream you would realize;
If possible, and I have no doubt
But what I can, I will fetch it out."

"So be it then, old witch," I cried,
And straightway did my dream describe—
The dream of a hope that was all in vain,
A hope impossible to attain.
'Twas only this that could make me sad,
For I was a blithesome, happy lad;
Never a worry or care had I,
Except when I thought on this fantasy,
And hoped, and yearned, that in time I'd see
That might, which isn't, what ought to be,
Or, that which isn't, but might be still,
What might have been, but never will.

This I told to the gipsy witch,
This one sad blight of my whole life, which
Was my fondest hope, and greatest wish,
To see built up in Marshall, Mich.,
An opera house. "Good faith!" cried she,
"Is that all?" "Well yes, it ought to be,
When all is considered," I replied,
"And viewing it from every side,
I must admit that tho' it appear

Trivial, still it is, I fear,
A hopeless hope, not to be attained,
A dream whose object never can be gained."
"What's that?" cried she, "a hopeless hope?
Nay, nay, my lad, I've got the dope.
See,"—And she untied a pack
Strapped upon her bony back
And opening it, she brought to view
A bottle filled with some strange brew;
It was of color a brilliant green
With a weird and fascinating sheen,
Like we sometimes see in a serpent's eye,
"And what might this stuff be?" asked I.
"This," she said, "is the greatest balm
Of human kind, and it will calm
The most turbulent spirits, and imparts
Good cheer and joy to the saddest hearts."

Then taking from her pack a glass,
A small one, of the whiskey class,
She filled and handed it to me,
Saying, "Now then we shall see
If your refractory hope
Won't yield to this seductive dope.
Drink it, my lad, and I surmise
Your dream will quickly realize."

Then eagerly I drained the glass.
I know not how it came to pass—
The trees and sky seemed disarranged,
And then—presto!—all had changed.
The witch and stream were gone, and I,
Sore astonished, was standing by
A building, of architecture grand,
The work, no doubt, of a master hand.
Stately columns of marble stone
And sculptured like I have never known,
Magnificent arches and lights that shed
A radiance over every head,
And in through the wide and stately door
Went a stream of people, rich and poor.
Perplexed and bewildered I
Watched these people passing by
And wondered what, and wondered why,
And where, and how it was that I
Was there—I could not understand,
Nor whence had come this structure grand.

I turned to someone standing near
And asked, "What is this building here?"
"What's that?" cried he, "why know you not
This blessing that old Marshall's got?
'Tis the opera house, and opening night;
It's free—go in and see the sight.
But hurry, for the building's jammed!"
I softly whispered—"Well, I'll be damned!"

Couldn't help it, had to swear,
And kicked my heels up in the air,
And capered 'round just like a boy,
And whooped and laughed for very joy.
At last, my dream, my fondest wish,
An opera house in Marshall, Mich.,
Was realized,—and in I went,
On full investigation bent.

Ye gods! To describe it I'll not try,
The spectacle that met my eye.
Purple curtains of plush and silk,
Columns that glittered with silver and gilt,
Myriad colored lights that blazed
With radiance of a million stars, and dazed
Me with the splendor of it all;
Beautiful paintings on the wall,
And gorgeous frescoes on the ceiling:
Entrancing music that came peeling
From out the pit of the orchestra,
(Which was Marshall's, by the way)
And the people in the audience—
Many I recognized at once.
He, of the tablet and raven hair,
The belt of Jupiter man, was there;
Likewise he, whose head was bare,
Also he, who was lank and spare;
Each had contributed each his share
To this magnificent, grand affair.

And the play—the play was a tragedy,
The title of which was “Never to Be.”
Rather strange, I philosophized,
When the never to be was realized,
And the play went on in a kind of maze,
For I seemed to be in a dreamy daze,
And drifting—drifting it seemed thro’ air,
Tho’ I knew I sat in the theater chair.
But the play went on and so did I,
Tho’ I heard not the lines of the tragedy.
Hours—days—and years it seemed
Went by, as I sat in the chair and dreamed—
Dreaming—I knew not what, only
That the dream was sweet as a summer day.

’Till finally a lull came o’er the place
And I roused and glanced at my neighbor’s face
And it caused me to start up in affright
And cry aloud at the horrible sight,
For he and all the others there
Grinned with a horrible, ghostly stare.
All were dead, and every one
Was a ghastly, grinning skeleton.
The splendid frescoes on the ceiling
And paintings on the wall were peeling.
Hideous bugs crawled on the wall;
Damp and dust were over all,
The musty curtains hung in shreds
And spiders spun their silken threads.

From skull to skull and in and out
Thro' eyeless sockets, worms crawled about.
It was, indeed, a ghastly sight
That met my gaze that fateful night,
Too horrified to move, I sat
Petrified, when a great bat
Flew in my face, and with a scream
I woke, to find it all a dream.

The river sang its reedy way,
The birds were singing blithè and gay,
And by my side I found the vial,
Whose contents had for one short while
Made real my dream, my hopeless hope.
But alas! I'd found it a hopeless dope.
The bottle was still three-quarters full
And the color grown a trifle dull,
I cast it from me with a frown
And made my way into the town.
And here the sight that met my eyes
Most truly filled me with surprise.
Buildings that I'd never seen
Stood where the ones I knew had been.
The place had changed from end to end,
Nor could I find a single friend;
Not one acquaintance could I meet
Among the people on the street.

Astonished and bewildered I
Stopped a party passing by
And begged them to tell me what
Had so changed the old familiar spot,
Where were the people that I knew,
And whence had come these buildings new?
They looked at me in cold surprise,
As if my talk had given rise
To doubts, as to my sanity.
Then one replied, "Sir, what d' you say?
I do not understand, I fear.
These buildings, you call new, were here
When I was born, years ago,
And as to people that you know,
If you know not these, I greatly fear
You'll find none, they too were born here."
"Is this not Marshall?" then I cried.
"It surely is," the man replied.
"Then what you say, sir, can't be true,"
I said, "For know you not I, too,
Was born here. What does it mean?
Your friends here I have never seen.
And yet I'm sure 'twas yesterday,
No longer gone, I passed this way,
And all these buildings I see now
Were not here then, on that I'll vow."
At this the crowd around me laughed

And one remarked, "He's gone clean daft."
"I've not," I cried. "Where's old Tom Wright?
I think he'll soon set matters right."
"Tom Wright," said they, "pray who is he?
We know him not, but here's John B.,

The only Wright who's come this way
For fully half a century."
Then John stepped out, an aged man,
Who had surely passed the four score span,
"Do you mean old 'Thomas N?'" asked he.
"Yes," I replied, "Where might he be?"
Then old John laughed—"Ho! ho! well, well!
Where might he be?—'Tis hard to tell.
He means my grand dad, it appears,
Why, he's been dead a hundred years."
"A hundred years!" I cried aghast,
As the truth began to dawn at last,
"Old man, is that the truth you spoke,
Or is it merely an idle joke?
What year is this? Come now, no tricks!"
He answered, "Twenty hundred and six."

I was stunned, but I knew it all was true,
The evidence I could not misconstrue;
I read it plain in every face,
And in the changes of the place.
"Over a hundred years," I cried,
"Since I lay down by the river side

And talked to that old gipsy witch
And drank that cursed potion which
Had caused me to sleep for a century,
And made it seem but one short day,
And to dream of that hopeless—Ha! but wait,
It might be true, it was not too late
To realize that old fantasy.

“Has Marshall an opera house yet?” asked I.
Then o’er each face came a sudden gloom,
“It is something, sir, we have never known,
But we’re to have one in a future day,
For shortly now, so the papers say,
There will be a meeting of prominent men
Who will organize a stock company—then
We are going to build!”—“Oh, rats!” I cried,
And wandered back to the river side.

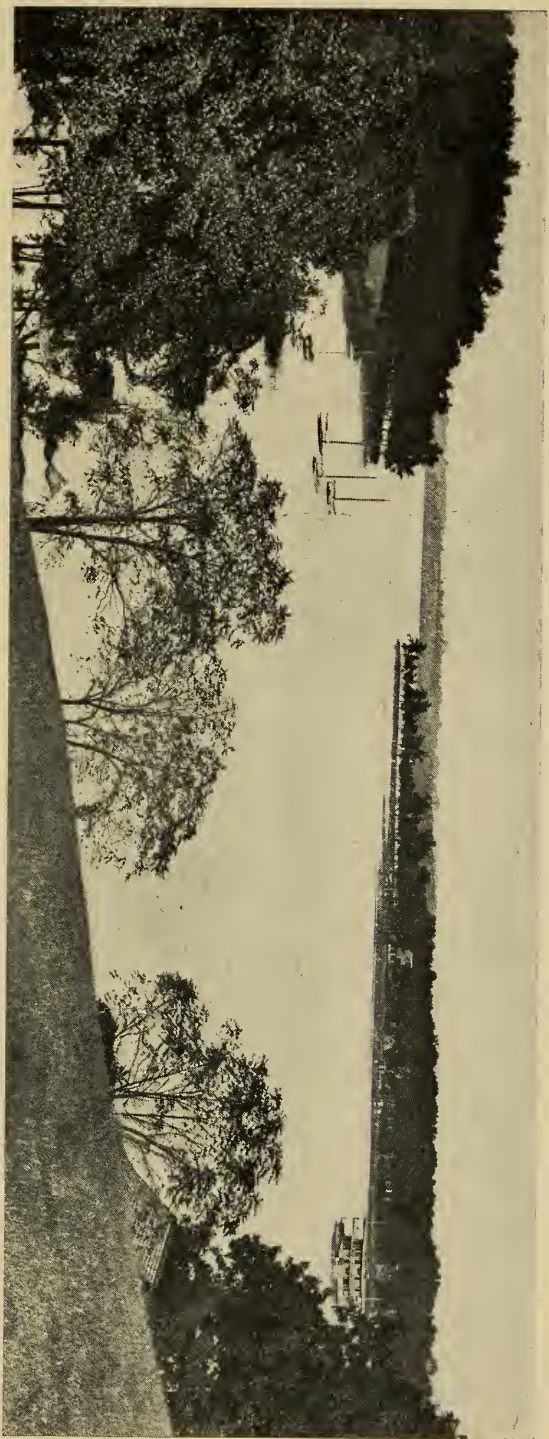
I found the bottle among the rushes
And a quiet spot among the bushes,
And sat me down and wrote this story,
And now that it’s finished in all it’s glory,
The contents of that bottle I’m going to drink
To the very last drop, and then I’ll sink
Into utter oblivion, beside this river
Where I hope I’ll sleep and dream forever.

Gull Lake

Green grow your banks, oh bonny Gull,
 Upon your peaceful breast
The music of your wavelets lull
 All nature into rest.
Among your trees the robin trills
 His little song of love,
While in your bushes coos and bills
 The gentle mourning dove.

You are a palace, bonny Gull,
 Of architecture rare,
Your chambers all are beautiful,
 Your halls beyond compare.
Your crystal waters are your floor,
 Your walls are green and high,
Your vine hung outlet is a door,
 Your ceiling is the sky.

I love you dearly, bonny Gull,
 I love your groves and highlands,
I love your waters clear and cool,
 I love your bays and islands.
If I could dwell beside your shore,
 Or by your peaceful river,
I'd be content and ask no more
 Than live and live forever.



BONNIE GULL

Springtime Ruminations

It seems ter me it's time ter take
A pack an' hike fer ol' Gull lake;
I'm overdue an' I sure hate
T' come a hikin' back there late.
Don't doubt but what th' robin's there,
An' peewee an'—I do declare—
I'll bet that blame ol' yellor shack
'S a-wonderin' why I ain't got back.

Must be most time fer trees ter bud,
An' frogs come crawlin' out th' mud,
An' holler round in them ol' bogs,
An' mate an' lay their pollywogs.
Don't s'pose th' oriole's got there yet
To th' dog-wood tree—but say, I'll bet
That ol' red-head in th' poplar tree
'S a-wonderin' what's become o' me.

Long about this time o' year
Th' water in th' lake's so clear
Jest fairly makes you gasp an' stare—
It's jest like lookin' right through air.
Time is past—er jest begun
The time, you know, the suckers run,
An' I'll bet ol' sucker asks his mate
“Wonder why that feller's late?”

Turtles out on my front stoop—
(I'd like a bowl o' turtle soup),
An' fish are prime, an' I guess how
That ol' back pasture holds a cow.
An' down 'round Yorkville neighborhood
I guess b'gosh, my credit's good
Fer bread an' cookies, pie an' meat;
Don't worry much 'bout what I'll eat.

S'pose I'll get there kind o' lame,
But th' birds—they'll all sing-jest th' same;
An' bees'll buzz, and frogs'll yell,
An' Chip'll ring his ol' bus bell,
An' th' ol' world, she'll wag along
A-keepin' time t' Bob White's song.
An' we'll be happy—will us three—
My ol' shack, Gull lake, an' me.

Back Again

Back again, by golly!
Do seem sartin good
T' be perambulatin'
Again 'round this wood.
See 'at same ol' Pee-wee,
Sassy tail a bobbin'—
Hey! there goes th' Chipmunk,
An'—hello, there, Robin,
You back? Glad t' see ye,
S'pose ye'll build yer nest
Same ol' place as last year—
Guess it's 'bout th' best.

Where's that gol-darn Red-head?
Hello! There he goes
A rat-a-tat-tat-tatin'
Bangin' o' his nose.
What's that air a holl'rin'
An' yellin' 'way off there?
Must be that ol' Blue-jay.
Why, t'is, I do declare.
Knew his voice th' minit
He let that holler out;
I'd know it 'mongst a thousan'
I ain't a nary doubt.

What you runnin off fer? ·
I ain't goin' t' hurt ye!
Y' Red Squirrel, y' act 'sif
Y' thot th' darn groun' burnt ye.
Come back an' git acquainted
With a feller critter, won't ye?
I only want t' be yer friend,
I don't want t' hunt ye.
See that little King-bird
Chasin' that dum Hawk,
Ain't they jes a goin' it?
Hear that bugger squawk.
Blamest lot o' howlin'
From a hawk I ever heard;
Guess he thinks tarnation
Is in that little bird.

There's that ol' Kingfisher
Settin' on a lim'.
Him an' me is pardners,
We fish—me an' him.
I do my fishin' in a boat
Er settin' in th' shack,
While he gets up on top a tree
An' does th' high dive act.
Trees air all a leafin',
Things air lookin' up;

Here's a little May flower,
There's a Buttercup.
See th' water sparkle,
Nothin' seems t' lack;
Mighty glad I'm back agin
T' my ol' yeller shack.

An Invitation

Wheat's a gettin' yellor,
 Corn's a-growin' fine,
Little melons comin' on
 The watermelon vine.
Birds air all a-singin',
 Sky is clear and blue—
Better come to Gull lake
 An' spend a day or two.

Fish air all a-bitin',
 Swimmin's outer sight;
Great, big moon a-shinin'
 In the sky 'most every night.
Chicken on the fence rail
 Makes a juicy stew—
Better come to Gull lake
 An' spend a day or two.

Lawsy! but the sunshine,
 Th' water an' th' shade
On this here reservation's
 Th' best twuz ever made,
Better take yer foot an'
 Stuff it in yer shoe,
An' come a hikin' out here
 An' spend a day or two.

A Protest

Y' say y' can't see nothin' pretty,
S'pose it's cause yer from th' city,
Dunno how!

Wouldn't know a sweet wild daisy
From a tissue paper poesy,
I'll allow.

But say, look where you oughter,
See that sky-blue sheet o' water,
See it flash?

See it ripp'lin' an' a sparklin'
An' a dimplin' an' a darklin'
See th' grass

On th' em'rald shores that bound it?
An' th' trees that grow around it
Hear them birds

A-singin' in th' bushes,
Hear them frogs there in th' rushes,
See them herds

A-browsin' on th' hill there,
Hear that Bobolink an' Killdeer?
Goodness sake!

Y'll find out's a reg'lar paradise,
When y' learn t' use yer ears an' eyes,
'Round this lake.

See them pretty violets growin',
See them water lilies blowin'
Over there?

Did y' ever in th' city,
See a sight, sir, half so pretty,
Half so fair?
This is truly Nature's garden,
Prettiest spot—eh? Beg yer pardon—
Who' th' gardner?
Who's th' one that spades an' digs it,
Culls an' prunes an' trims an' twigs it?
God is, pardner.
He's th' gen'ral sup'rintendent,
He's this garden's main dependant,
Keeps it green.
Prettiest place in all creation,
As sweet a spot as any nation
Ever seen.
You kin talk of other places
That have marble walks an' vases;
Wouldn't take
All them outfits in th' land, sir,
Fer a half a cup o' sand sir,
From Gull lake.



THE OLD STONE BRIDGE

The Little Brown Eyed Lass

Down where the river broadens
Just above the old stone bridge,
Where the sunlight softly filters,
Through the elm trees on the ridge,
Where the wild grape vine is clinging
O'er the water gently swinging,
There the birds were ever singing
Of a little brown eyed lass.

Where we drifted in the shadows
Of that sweet old long ago,
And the birds—they helped me tell her
How I loved her, loved her so,
And her answer, softly spoken
By her honeyed lips, gave token
Of a compact long since broken
By a little brown eyed lass.

Those green, sweet scented bowers;
Ah! what memories they hold
Of the fount of love's young passions
That were quenched but never cold.
Where her dark red golden tresses
Seemed to fold me in their meshes
As I showered sweet caresses
On the little brown eyed lass.

I wonder does she ever,
In her thoughts or in a dream,
Go back to those old days along
That shady, quiet stream,
With its ivy and its flowers
And its deep, green shady bowers,
And the sunshine and the showers
And the little brown eyed lass.

And down where the river broadens;
Just above the old stone bridge,
Where the silver leaf is growing
On the banks along the edge,
The years decay are bringing,
But fond memory still is clinging,
And the birds seem ever singing
Of a little brown eyed lass.

The Outlet

Jest as pretty as a picture,
Nary ripple, nary breeze,
To disturb the peaceful quiet
O' th' water an' th' trees;
An' the fragrance o' th' sumac
Creepin' through th' atmosphere,
Mixin' with th' drone o' insects,
Makes you glad that you are here.

Elderberry blossoms shinin'
Starry like against th' green;
Ivy hangin' o'er th' water
Like a fairy palace screen—
Hear th' water kind o' murmur
Like an ol' forgotten song,
Bringin' back some ol' sweet mem'ry,
Dreamin' as you drift along.

Overhead th' vines are swingin',
Overhead th' elm trees meet,
Shuttin' in refreshin' coolness,
Shuttin' out th' stiflin' heat.
Up there through th' leaves an' branches,
Catch a glimpse o' sunny skies,
Watch th' dreamy colors fleetin'—
Little piece o' paradise!

A Little Shack Sermon

Oh, the days are warm and balmy,
And the world is full o' joy,
And I'm feeling just as frisky
As when I was a boy.
Th' buds are all a bustin'
An' the dust's begun to fly,
An' I'm kind o' sort o' feelin'
Like I never want to die.

My, the medder's lookin' handsome!
An' jest the other day
I heard a little lark out in
The ol' back forty say-
That he'd traveled in Kentucky
And he'd been in Florida,
But he reckoned how this weather
Beat them others every way.

An' jest then a little robin got
Conversing like with me,
Said he wa'n't much on philos'phy,
But, b'gosh, he couldn't see
Why 'twas men folks was never
Satisfied or yet content,
But kept kickin' on th' weather
No matter how it went.

And jest then a little peewee
Chirped up real pert an' bold,
Said, "Men folks is always kickin'
When it's jest a little cold."
An' he further said in passin',
"In a week's time like as not,
They'll be jawin' round like sixty,
Cause it's jest a little hot.

Then they all joined in together
An' sang me a little song,
An' the theme was, "Jest be happy,
Let th' old world wag along
Any blame way that she pleases,
An' you'll find this motto true,
If you'll only jest be happy
She'll be always bright to you."

P. S.

I might further say in passin',
If the aunt of Doll Louise
Will jest take her op'ry glasses
An' git out here 'mongst the trees,
She'll be pow'ful interested
In the spectacle she'll see,
For a mountain wood peck's nested
In the Red Head's poplar tree.

Weather Signs

De fields am turnin' yellor
 An' de leaves am turnin' red,
De corn am dry an' rustlin'
 An' de daisys all am dead.
An' de wood chuck say he reckon
 It's most time ter go ter bed,
So I guess it's time ter look out fer de winter.

De politician reckons dat it's
 Gittin' time ter vote,
An' de raccoon's sent his order
 Fer his winter overcoat,
An' Norton's gittin' ready
 Fer ter store away his boat,
So I guess it's time ter look out fer de winter.

Musk rats mighty busy now
 A shinglin' up der roof,
An' de possum he complainin'
 Dat he ain't got clothes enuff,
An' dem am signs I reckon
 Dat am pretty sutton proof
Dat it must be time to look out fer de winter.

Retrospect

I met you first in a hammock
In the grove of Idlewild,
I was only a half grown boy,
And you were only a child ;
I was too young to understand,
And you were too young to know
Of the great white light that came into my life,
And, that I loved you so.

Our first quarrel was smoothed in a hammock,
On a porch in old Kazoo,
And I told you then that I loved you so
And you promised that you'd be true,
But one man says, what the other man says,
And, you were too young to know
That the great white light was dimming fast
And, that I loved you so.

I saw you last in a hammock,
On the shores of the Michigan,
You were sitting contented and happy,
By the side of another man ;
Then the merciful night shut out the sight,
For you were too young to know
That the great white light went out that night
And, that I loved you so.

And the days and the nights of the hammock
Are long, and long ago,
And over the sand, with a groping hand,
Tottering, feeble and slow,
A blind man goes on forever—
And you are too young to know
That the light that led is cold and dead
And, that I love you so.

When You Went Home

When you went home, the void you left behind
Seemed chaos, and the shadows settled fast,
And the gloominess that now pervades my mind
Is likened to a dark sky overcast.
Today, I wander dreary and alone
Through empty rooms that still more empty seem
Because of your sweet presence which is gone,
Leaving but a fondly cherished dream.

A dream I know the years cannot efface,
Tho' I should live through an eternity,
No other charms, I feel, can e'er displace
Those few short hours I had you yesterday.
And as the robin of his mate bereft
Disconsolately mourns upon the tree,
Knowing no comfort, so when you had left,
I mourned for your sweet presence lost to me.

Alas, for mortal man, who can but live
Within the present; that present, bitter gall,
Still hoping that the future yet may give
The sweet, dead pleasures he cannot recall.
And thus, dear heart, I sadly long for you,
The touch of your soft hand, so fondly pressed,
The gleam of eyes so tender, brown and true,
The pressure of your form against my breast.

When you went home, although but yesterday,
So deeply have I mourned your presence gone,
The time has seemed a dark eternity,
Whose midnight gloom can never know a dawn,
Unless, perchance, dear heart, the Fates decree
That my vain hopes may be not all in vain.
That the as yet unknown future holds for me
The gladsome joy, to have you back again.

When You Kissed Me

When you kissed me,
A something, a vague, sweet memory,
A vision of one I used to know
Came drifting out of the long ago—
 When you kissed me.

It seemed to me,
From somewhere, a low, sweet melody,
An old love song that I used to know,
Came softly out of the long ago—
 When you kissed me.

It brought to me
A feeling, a forgotten ecstasy,
A burst of sunshine out of the old,
From a heart I deemed as dead and cold—
 When you kissed me.

It brought to me
A longing; I yearned once more to be
Back where the skies were soft and blue,
And all the world was for you, sweet you—
 When you kissed me.

There seemed to be
A sweet voice, whispering low to me,
Coming from somewhere out of the blue,
An old sweet dream that breathed of you—
 When you kissed me.

It seemed to me
That some one, some one I could not see,
Trod lightly on a forgotten grave;
But, oh! what a feeling of peace it gave
 When you kissed me.

The Message

Did you hear the song that the robin sang
Just at the break of dawn?
Did you note how strong and clear it rang
From out there on the lawn?
Did you understand the joyous trill
That echoed over wood and hill
Singing the message sweet and clear,
"The spring is here, the spring is here?"

Did you hear the chatter of the rill
As it broke from its icy bond,
And the soft south wind come over the hill
And ripple across the pond?
Did you catch the scent in the morning air,
A scent of something sweet and rare?
Don't you hear the message the little bees hum,
"The spring is come, the spring is come?"

Did you see where the wind blew the leaves aside
Down by the willow tree
Where a little blue violet was trying to hide
As it coyly whispered to me—
"The wintry winds and the snow have fled,
I think it safe to come out," it said.
"Indeed," sang the robin, "there's nothing to fear,
The spring is here, the spring is here."

Ye Minds Me

Ye minds me o' th' violet,
Your bonny een o' blue,
Sae soft an' seemin' kindly
Wi' sunglints flashin' through.
Ye minds me o' th' lily fair,
Your face sae sweet an' white,
Wha's radiance sae quickly turns
A' mirkness into light.

Ye minds me o' th' briar rose
Alang th' burnie brink,
For I can see reflected in
Your cheeks its saft warm pink.
But och! that rose is treacherous
An' o' it you're a part,
For ye ha'e left a stingin' thorn
Wi'in a broken heart.

The Boy You Used to Know

Do you 'member th' boy you uster know,
That little barefoot kid,
Way back in th' days o' long ago—
Remember th' things he did?
Remember th' games he uster play?
Hide 'n' coop 'n' runaway,
Stumpin' each other up in th' hay,
Wasn't it jest splendid?

Down t' th' river wasn't it fun
That little boy yo' knew,
Fishin' fer suckers along the run,
Er paddlin' his canoe?
Do y' 'member th' merry shout an' laugh,
As he went scootin' along th' path
T' th' ol' deep hole, t' take his bath,
That other me an' you?

Jevver git kind o' a wistful wish
Fer th' little boy y' knew?
Would y' like t' git down by the dam an' fish,
Jest like he uster do?
Would you like to get out in the road and play,
One ol' cat, er pullaway,
Er follow th' clown on circus day,
Like that little you o' you?

I sometimes wish I could wipe away
Th' years I have left behin',
All but about eleven say,
An' sort o' fall in line
With them other kids I uster know,
An' run an stumble an' stub my toe,
Jest like he uster—years ago,
That other me o' mine.

Jest

Jest to set down together
An' talk the matter o'er,
Jest ter jaw together
Like we used ter do of yore ;
Jest ter go fishin' together
An' drink a glass er two,
An' sing a song together—
Jest like we used ter do.

Jest ter be th' same ol' chums
Jest fer oncet er twicet,
Jest ter be the jolly bums
We were 'fore we got spliced ;
Jest ter be back in th' same ol' place
Jest like we used ter be,
Jest fer th' sake o' 'ol' times, Ace—
Jest only you an' me.

When Autumn's Come

When Autumn's come, an' leaves
Have turned ter colors manifold,
An' th' fields are all resplendent
With their coats o' red an' gold,
Right there at th' point o'
The good ol' summer's end,
When th' cold ol' winter sort o'
Pokes her nose aroun' th' bend.

Frosty nights, an' hick'ry nuts
A-droppin' off th' trees,
An' a smell that's sweet an' woody
Sort o' minglin' with th' breeze,
Birds all packin' up an'
Fussin' roun' t' beat th' band,
An' on th' fly, when Autumn's come,
An' off fer Dixie land.

Woods all hushy like an' still,
Nary robin flyin',
Jest th' leaves up over head
Sort o' softly sighin',
Mebby see a red squirrel
Go a-scootin' up a tree,
An' set up on a limb an'
Chatter soc'ble like t' me.

Muskrats all a-hustlin',
Layin' up their fall supplies,
An' fox-squirrels mighty busy
Buildin' mansions in th' skies,
An' me likewise a-fig'rin'
Where I'm goin' ter make my hum
So that I'll be snug an' warm,
Like them, when Autumn's come.

Dearie O

Ae day I wandered down a stream
An' on the slopin' grassy brink,
Where buddin' willows wimplin' dream,
I sat me down, awhile, to think.
An' a' the world seemed blythe an' glad
But aye my heart was weary o',
An' a' my thoughts were drear an' sad
Frac longin' for my dearie o.

An' in the middle o' my care
I heard a foot step soundin' near,
An' glancin' up saw standing there
The bonny lass I lo'e sae dear.
Then a' my sorrows quickly fled
An' a' the world was cheerie o',
An' aye my heart was blythe instead
Frac bein' wi' my dearie o'.

Her locks were like the raven's plume,
Her lips like cherries wat wi' dew,
An' aye I fear I've met my doom
Frac her twa een sae brown an' true.
The bob-o-links went whislin' by
An' sang to us sae cheerie o',
An' ilky note an' ilky cry,
Seemed praises to my dearie o'.

The robin redbreasts up above
Were perched upon the swingin' vine,
An' ilky ane sang o' their love
An' sweetly sae did I o' mine.
An' aye I never will forget
Tho' a' the world be dreary o',
Wi' pleasure I'll remember yet
The day I spent wi' dearie o'.

An Epistle to James Whitcomb Riley

Yes—God bless you Riley,
That's jest what I say.
You've helped to make me "smiley,"
But in a diffrent way
Than what th' other feller wrote,
That I read in "Century's" book,
Fer you've taught me t' make note
An' make me see, an' look.
You've taught what th' flowers mean,
An' 'bout th' birds that sing,
You've taught me why th' fields are green,
An' love,—an' every-thing.
I'll haf ter tell ye on th' start
To understand me Riley,
That long before I read yer heart,
I wuz a sort o' "smiley"
But not th' kind that I am now—
I'll admit, an' I'm glad to,
Fer 'twas after you had showed me how,
I smiled because I had to.
An' you've done a heap to cheer me up
When gloomy thoughts were with me.
An' I wish that I could pay ye back
Th' happy ones you've give me.
I'd like to know ye better, sir,
If you will only let me,
Though if it isn't to yer wish

O' course ye kin ferget me,
But I ask t' let me be yer friend
As you've been my friend, Riley,
I wait yer answer t' that end,
Yours truly,—H. D. Smiley.

Im Jest a Boy

There ain't no use o' talkin'
T' a man like me,
An' tellin' me o' what I am,
An' what I ought to be,
An' the time that I'm a wasting,
An' could otherwise employ,
Fer after all is said an' done
I'm jest a boy.

I ain't never had no wishin'
Fer to glorify my name,
Ner I ain't got no hankerin'
Fer any worldly fame.
I'm satisfied jest as I be
With nothin' to annoy,
Wuss'n prob'ly gittin' hungry, fer
I'm jest a boy.

I'll own I am twenty-six t' day
An' folks 'll tell you I'm
A good fer nothin' feller
An' a loafin' all the time.
But I ain't no reputation
Fer them folks to destroy,
Fer it happens, I ain't nothin'
But jest a boy.

I don't envy them that's got
Their reputation made,
An's up there on th' hill of fame
A baskin' in th' shade.
The joys of wealth I've noticed
Sometimes has a bad alloy,
An' I reckon I'm contented
I'm jest a boy.

The medder's jest as green fer me,
The birds sing jest as clear
T'day, as they did yesterday,
Er way back fifteen year.
I'm glad t' get the little things
O' life, an' know the joy,
O' rustic health, an' also that
I'm jest a boy.

My Ol' Man

They's a' ol' man lives nex' t' us,
Wite over our back fence,
He's such a goody-good ol' man—
He gimme wunst fi' cents,
An' some days when he's workin',
In his garden patch I'll frow
A stone at him to scare him,
All 'ist in fun you know,
'Nen he'll look my way,
An' jump and say,
"Hey there! Hey there! Young feller, look out!
Hey there! young feller, see whatcher about.
Y' better come over an' beg my pardon,
Just see what you've done t' my new garden,
Hey there! young feller, look out."

He's got th' nices' garden patch,
All full of flowers an' things,
An' little beds o' pansies,
All planted round in rings.
An' wunst I climbed an' stealed,
(Did it 'ist in fun, y' know).
Up where he had his barrow wheeled,
An' tipped it over on his toe.

'Nen he looked my way,
An' jump and say,
"Hey there! Hey there! Young feller, look out!
Hey there! young feller, see whatcher about.
Y' better come over an' beg my pardon,
Just see what you've done t' my new garden,
Hey there! young feller, look out."

One day they wuz a fun'ral,
In his house, nex' t' ours,
An' my ma cried, an' carried o'er
A big white bunch o' flowers,
An' I've been 'ist as lonesome
As could be, ever sence,
An' some days I'll go out, an' set,
An' wish, on our back fence,
'At he'd look my way,
An' jump and say,
"Hey there! Hey there! Young feller, look out!
Hey there! young feller, see whatcher about.
Y' better come over an' beg my pardon,
Just see what you've done t' my new garden,
Hey there! young feller, look out."

Waiting For His Sweetheart

When de night'n'gale am singin'
 An' de silv'ry moon am flingin',
Her beams erroun' de trees;
 When de sparklin' dewes am fallin'
An' de katydids am callin',
 I'se waitin' fo' yo', Louise.

I'se waitin' in de shadder
 Ob de gum tree in de medder,
Dats rustlin' in de breeze;
 An' de ol' owl am a hootin',
An' de black bat am a scootin',
 Ain' yo' gwine hurry up, Louise?

Now I hear yo' voice a hummin',
 An' I know yo' is a comin',
Des like de summer breeze;
 Now I see yo' come a skippin'
An' a dancin' an' a trippin',
 Mighty glad yo' here, Louise.

A Riddle

Little guess you how these lines,
Carelessly composed here,
Laud a maiden whom I know
Who reads her name reposed here.
From artless observation 'tis
Concealed beyond a doubt here;
Yet a careful scrutiny,
Shall find it in about here.
Her rosebud lips and raven hair
And figure lithe and slender,
And the love-light of her eyes
Have dazed me by their splendor.
Her gentle way, regardless of
A person's reputation,
Her kind smile and her sweet young face,
They fill me with elation.
And so I've written here her name
And carefully I've rhymed it.
And so well it is concealed
I defy the world to find it.

Life

The years will come and the years will go,
Soft zepthers sigh, and chill winds blow.
Man shall be born, and man shall die,
As has been in all past history.
And during the intervening time,
Twixt birth and death, he'll drink and dine.
Go down to poverty, or up to wealth,
Have days of illness, and days of health,
He'll go into business, or work at a trade,
He'll fall in love with some sweet maid,
He'll woo to win, or he'll woo to lose,
It's a question of chance as every one knows.
He'll have a home and children and wife,
Or remain a bachelor all of his life.
If the former, he'll get a preliminary style
Of the place he'll land at after while.
Or if it's the latter, why then he'll think
That he's been slighted, and take to drink.
And so down the river of life he'll go
Riding the side where the chill winds blow.
Always pushing the wrong canoe,
Over the joys that he thought he knew.
While the birds sang sweet and the zepthers sighed
Over there on the opposite side.
Bill made a fortune, Bob got a wife,
Joe stayed a bachelor all of his life.

“Lucky cuss” each of them, each says so.
Bill to Bob and Bob to Joe,
While Joe the acme of luck, to Bob,
Bows his head with a broken sob.
Envies the luck of the other men,
And silently broods what might have been.

What De Use

What de use to worry, when yo' pants wear
through,

Ol' woman gwine to patch 'em, so dey jes' es good
es new ;

What de use ob frettin' when de fish won't bite,
Bound ter git a 'possum, when de moon shine
bright.

What de use to worry 'bout de Trusts an' ring,
Ain' no Trust disputin' dis nigger's right to sing;
What de use ob frettin' when de world go wrong,
Ef yo' feel a l'il grumpy, jes' sing a l'il song.

Dis world am full ob trouble ef yo' lookin' fo' it boy,
But yo'll also find by lookin' dat she jest chuckful
ob joy.

So what de use ob frettin' when yo' luck seem tough,
She gwine be all right bime bye, 'f yo' jest wait
long enough.

My L'il Tiny Gal

De roses sigh when she go by,
 My l'il Tiny gal,
An de daisies hol' der heads up high,
 My l'il Tiny gal,
De ol' sun stare when he see her hair
An' he say to hisself, "Well, I declare,
If dat ain't night a-right down dare,"
 My l'il Tiny gal.

De souf wind stop when she come 'long,
 My l'il Tiny gal,
De night'n'gale sing his sweetes' song,
 My l'il Tiny gal,
When de ol' moon look, she so su'prise,
Say, "Dey ain't no use fo' de stars to rise,
Fo' de can't outshine dem sparklin' eyes,"
 My l'il Tiny gal.

De sea waves play when she come dat way,
 My l'il Tiny gal,
An' dey say she sweet as de summer day,
 My l'il Tiny gal,
Ol' Neptune he hol' up his han'
An' he look at her an' say, "My lan'!
Ef dat ain't Venus on de san,"
 My l'il Tiny gal.

Yo' Unc' Douglas' Greetin's

Wish yo' Merry Chris'mus
An' er Happy New Yeah;
Jolly time a comin'
An' hits putty nearly heah.
Ol' Santy's shuah hikin
An' I know he on de way,
Cayse he call me up an' tol' me
On de phone de uddah day.

He say yo' needn' list'n
Fo' de sleigh bells eny mo';
Nor ter heah de reindeah trompin',
Cayse he disserpoint yo' sho'.
Want ter list'n fo' er whistle
An' de gratin' of er wheel,
Cayse he writ me dat he comin',
In er autermobeel.

He tol' me 'bout some presents
Dat's er gwine ter make yo' stare;
But I promised not ter tell hit,
So of coes' I doesn't dare;
Tol' me 'bout some li'l gals,
An' bad bad li'l boys;
An' say, ef dey don't done behave
Dey don't git eny toys.

I'se out las' night er talkin'
To ol' Hoot Owl in de tree.
Who's er pus'nal frien' of Santy's
An' er pus'nal frien' of me.
An' he prognos'cate de weathah
Gwine to change some that-a-way,
So dat time dat Chris'mus git heah
We'se be ready fo' de sleigh.

An' I talk wif Mistah Raccoon,
Who 'uz totin' of er load;
An' he say dey heaps of turkeys
In de coops er long de road.
An' he tol' me 'bout some pullets
Dat 'uz lookin' mighty fine;
So I reckon how dat somer
Dem dare pullets gwine be mine.

An' I talk wif Mistah Rabbit,
An' I talk wif ol' Jây Bird;
An' dey tell me dat dis Chris'mus
Be de bigges' evah heard.
An' we all jines in t'gethah
Wif er ha'ty good cheah;
An' we wish yo' Merry Chris'mus
An' er Happy New Yeah.

The Jason Swamp Muskeeter

Wunst a city feller come t' our house t' board.
We live six miles from Spunkville, right up near
Jason's ford.

He said he needed country air an' country grub an'
stuff,
An' showed us what his doctor wrote t' certify th'
bluff.

We ain't much room in our house, so ma told him
if he

Wa'n't over much particler why, she'd have him
sleep with me.

He said he'd rather sleep alone, but then, o' course
if it

Wuz goin' t' over-crowd us why he wouldn't mind
a bit.

Th' fun begun that very night, mōst soon's we got
t' bed,

When a Jason swamp muskeeter come a-buzzin'
'round his head,

An' buzzed around' an' buzzed aroun' an' buzzed
aroun' until

That feller set right up in bed an' jest let out a yell.

An' grabbed an' slapped, an' slapped an' grabbed,
an' grabbed agin, till I

Jest had t' git t' laffin' an' I laffed most fit t' die.

An' then he jumped clean outer bed an' grabbed a
book an' he
Allowed he'd ketch that pesky thing an' smash it
up, b'gee.

An' then he lit out with his book an' slammed it
'ginst th' wall,
But that 'er dum muskeeter went a-buzzin' through
it all.
Then he grabbed th' bed sheet an' swished it up
an' down,
But that 'er blamed muskeeter jest went buzzin'
roun' an' roun'.

He smashed th' lamp an' chimney, th' table an' him-
self,
An' a lot o' rickety-doodles that wuz a settin' on
th' shelf;
He aimed a swipe at nowhere, an' then he stopped
t' hear,
An' that gol-darn muskeeter 'ud be buzzin' in his
ear.

An' so he kept th' racket up fer purty nigh a hour,
Tryin' t' kill that dum muskeeter all ways 'twas in
his power,
Till finally he petered out, and sot down on th'
floor;
Then that Jason swamp muskeeter went a buzzin'
out th' door.

An' th' last we seed o' that air city feller wuz nex'
day

When' as soon's he'd finished breakfast he started
right away

An' went a pikin' down th' road, straight fer th'
city line,

With that Jason swamp muskeeter a buzzin' 'long
behin'.

Uncle Ike's Swim

See them young fellers splashin' ?
S'pose they think their swimmin' now ;
Pshaw, I'd like to jest undress
And go an' show 'em how ;
But Liza says I musn't
'Cause (she says) I'm gettin' old ;
Pshaw—but, then, I kind o' guess
The water's still too cold.

But jest wait a little longer
Till the water's warmer yet,
An' I'll show them young fellers
What swimmin' is, you bet ;
An' I don't care what Liza says
'Bout me a gittin' old—
I'd like to show them boys right now,
But—the water's too dum cold.

I've swum these waters man an' boy,
For more than forty year ;
An' I know every stone an' stump
In this here river here.
An' that's all bosh what Liza says
'Bout me a gittin' old,
I ain't, an lemme see—why no,
This water ain't so cold.

B'gosh, I'm goin' to try it,
An' Liza she can jest
Jaw all she blame pleases,
Cause I guess that I know best.
Can't understand what makes her think
That I'm a gittin' old;
Jest cause my hair's a little thin,
No sign my feet are cold.

Ouch!! b-r-r-r!—Oh, lawsy! Wow!
Hey there, you fellers there,
Jest stop yer gol darn laughin'
An' help me out o' here.
B-r-r-r—by jumpin' jingo, but
That water's cussed cold—
—Guess my Liza knows her biz,
I guess I'm gittin' old.

Bert

His name is Bert ;
Begrimed is his shirt,
 And tattered his pants and coat,
And he wears a smile
Like a cankerous bile
 As I've frequently taken note ;
He comes down the pike
With a kangaroo hike,
 And a whistle that's always dry,
And that cankerous grin,
With the sides dented in,
 And a moon struck gaze in his eye.

There's a frisky r'ar
To his greaser hair,
 That never connects with the shears,
And the bloom of the rose
In his bibulous nose,
 And a wigglety wag to his ears ;
There's a rubbery curve,
And a sinuous swerve
 Where his head and body meet,
And a curvature stoop,
And a far reaching snoop,
 And a frivolous shake to his feet.

He's never too late
To light out on a freight,
He travels the roads for fair;
He can slumber and dream
On a bouncing break beam,
And plenty of room to spare.
He has wonderful luck,
At bunning his chuck,
A back door he never will shirk.
Tho' he lives like a king,
It's a singular thing,
That he's never been caught doing work.

When he ventures to sleep,
The elements leap
And dance to his thunderous roar;
There was never a blow,
Or a volcano,
That could equal that terrible snore.
Yes, Bert is his name,
And regarding the same,
When you hear it you want to watch out;
Don't give him a chance
To connect with your pants,
Or he'll touch you, there's nary a doubt.

Ol' Kit

Yes, sir, stranger, tell yo' she
'S th' smartest horse yo' ever see.
Once one year when crops was pore,
I was up agin it sure.
Meanest year I ever seen,
Didn't even raise a bean;
Looked like poor house er th' jail,
So I held an auction sale.

Had the printer print some bills
All decorated 'roun' with frills,
An' advertised to sell our cow,
Four little pigs an' our ol' sow,
Ten head o' sheep, an' pair o' ox,
A set o' wheels, an' wagon box,
An' tho' I sort o' hated it,
Advertised to sell ol' kit.

I had owned her then purt nigh
Fifteen year, an' I thinks I
She's most worn out, an' ol, an' so
I guessed I'd better let her go.
She was a mighty good horse tho',
Mebby jest a little slow,
But jest as smart as she could be,
An' I knowed her, an' she knowed me.

Allus give a kind o' snort,
Soci'ble like, as if she sort
O' said, "Good mornin' pard," when I'd
Come out t' hitch her fer a ride.
Knowin'st critter ever was,
Never had ter tie her, cause
She'd sure stand. An' didn't scare
O' steam cars, er seem t' care
A single whoop fer anything
That flew on wheels, er on the wing.

An' she knowed every word I'd say,
Fer instance, I'd say, "Kit, t' day
We'll drive out an' visit Jim,
An' spend the afternoon with him;
An' I'll jest turn you out, my lass,
Ter get a chaw o' medder grass."
Then she'd prick her ears up straight
An' hike out like a man that's late
T' catch his train, an' never stop
'Til she'd got there, sure as pop.

But now she's gettin' ol', thinks I,
She'll be useless by an' bye.
An' tho' I hated like Sam Hill,
I put her down on that blame bill.
Tacked two bills up in the store,

An' long th' road I tacked some more
On telegraph poles, so folks could tell
Jest what it was I had to sell.
An' t' make th' blame thing sure,
Tacked one up on our barn door.

Well, while I was tackin' that,
Something kind o' tipped my hat,
An' glancin' 'roun' I saw that Kit
Was lookin' sort o' hard at it.
Kit she couldn't read o' course,
(Couldn't 'spect it o' a horse.)
But, stranger, when she see that bill
She jest eyed it kind o' still,
Purt nigh a minute, an' then she
Turned aroun' an' looked at me.

An' mister, I'm right here t' swear
On that look. Why, I declare,
No use o' talkin', it was jest
About the most reproachfullest
I ever saw. Why, I'll be blowed,
I ain't a doubt but what she knowed
Exactly jest what that bill read,
I felt so cheap I hung my head.

Looked at me—an' stranger, I
Jest couldn't look her in the eye.
An then she come an' rubbed her nose
All aroun' on my ol' clothes,

An' sort o' wiggle wagged her ears,
An', by ginger, they was tears
In her old eyes, on that I'll swear,
I know because I saw them there.

Made me feel so dog gone cheap,
When I seen that ol' horse weep,
Had ter weep myself, er swear,
An' I did, right then an' there;
Jest let right out strong an' swore
An' snatched that bill right off th' door,
Jumped on th' cart, an' said, "Kit, les'
Go right straight back an' git th' rest."

An', by gosh, when I said that
You'd oughter seen that ol' horse scat.
Down the road she went ker whiz—
Reckon how she knowed her biz,
Fer when we come to that first bill
She jest stopped herself dead still,
Reached right out an' snatched it clean
Right off that pole as slick's a bean.
Did it with her teeth, by gosh,
Oh, you kin laugh, it ain't no josh.

Yes, I held that auction sale,
Had ter do it sure, er fail;
But you kin bet yer bottom bit
That I didn't sell ol' Kit;
An' in spring time, er th' fall,

Summer, winter, snow an' all,
You kin see us drivin' 'roun'
In th' country er th' town,
Satisfied as we kin be
That we are, ol' Kit an' me.

My Choice

Some folks I know like city life,
With its ever lastin' noise an' strife;
An' its dust, an' over powerin' heat,
Some think th' city can't be beat.

But I'll take th' big north woods fer mine,
Along with th' deer an' th' porcupine,
An' th' ol' log shack, an' th' spruce bough bed,
An' th' ol' smoked rafters over head.

I'll follow th' trail at early dawn,
O' th' timid deer, an' th' spotted fawn,
Where th' shadows are deep, an' cool, an' rare,
With th' breath o' th' pines in th' mornin' air.

I'll follow th' line o' th' timbered shore,
Aroun' th' lake, where th' fish hawks soar,
Down by th' dam where th' beaver works,
An' th' shady pools where th' brook trout lurks.

An' in th' dusk I'll wander back
Ter th' shelterin' roof o' th' ol' log shack,
An' set by th' fire, an' smoke, an' dream,
An' listen again t' th' Bob cats scream.

Some folks say city life is best.
They say that there they are happiest;
Well, that's their choice, so let it be,
But th' big pine woods is th' place fer me.

As Mrs. Wiggs Says

"Looks like everything in the world comes right
If we jes' wait long enough,"
Altho' there's times in a feller's life
When things looks mighty tough;
But I guess what Mrs. Wiggs says is right,
Tho' I never thought before;
But had figured it out through my sore foot
That the hull blamed world wuz sore.

But she seemed ter think when her trouble come,
That it ought ter be jes' so;
(An I know some folks who growl at th' rain
That makes th' flowers grow;)
An' I guess Mrs. Wiggs has got it right,
An' I guess I'll try a spell
O' seein' th' heaven side o' things,
Instead o' seein' hell.

The Optimist

When his crops went wrong he didn't blame
The weather man for that;
When he lost eight cows in a poker game
He grinned and took his hat,
And said as he wandered out the door,
"I'll buckle in and earn some more."

When a cyclone came along one day
Quite sudden like an' blew
The ol' farm house where he lived away
An' the barn an' hen coop too,
He says to me with a feeble grin,
"I guess I kin build 'em up agin."

An' I 'member once on a nice spring day
When everything seemed just right,
That his hogs all died of the cholera
And he buried 'em all that night;
And he said as he gazed in the empty pen,
"Well, it ain't so bad as it might a been."

And the day that the ol' bull histed him
Clean over the pasture lot,
An' broke his arm an' his good right lim'
An' we strapped him on a cot,
He smiled at me an' he says again,
"Well, tain't so bad as it might a been."

He never cried an' he never sighed
When his troubles came along,
He even laughed when his ol' mule died
An' hummed a little song,
"An' he says to me quite cheerfully,
"Things ain't so bad as things might be."

On a rainy day he used to say,
"I ain't no room for sorrow,
Ef the sun don't shine like she ought today
She'll mebbby shine tomorrow;
They ain't no use fer to fret an' stew
Jest count your blessin's—don't get blue."

My Bosses

I've hit the trail in th' big woods,
An' I've camped in the big wood shacks,
An' I've took my turn at swingin' an ax
With th' rest o' th' lumber jacks.
An' my boss was a big, black, roarin'
An' cussin' French Canuck,
Who cussed his men with a right good will
An' cussed 'em agin fer luck.

I've followed th' Four X round up
From Wind River to Cheyenne;
An' slept with th' sky fer a bed quilt
On th' ground o' th' Big Horn plain.
An' my boss was a red head Irish,
With a voice like a locoed steer,
An' th' cuss o' him had a go an' vim
That would do you good to hear.

I've worked my shift in a copper drift,
At th' fortieth level down,
An' I've done my trick with a drill an' pick,
An' I've pushed th' tram car 'roun.
An' my boss was a big, fat Polock,
Who jawed in his native tongue,
An' th' cuss o' him made your eyes grow dim,
So pathetic and sweet it rung.

An' th' man that's a telling this story,
 (Otherwise known as me),
Is at present employed a-working
 In a Michigan factory.
An' my boss is a sweet, young critter,
 A mild-eyed, little gazelle,
An' I ain't heard her swear since I've been there,
 An' don't reckon I ever will.

Yes, I am th' ring-tailed snorter,
 Right out o' th' woolly west,
With a bowie knife down in my bootleg
 An' a forty-four under my vest.
Me who's wolloped a bronco
 From th' Bitter Creek range to Cal.,
Is a workin' at civilized labor
 An' being bossed by a gal.

The Yesterdays

Down in the vistas of far away,
Back in the vale of memory,
Where a little boy sings as a little boy plays,
Is the cherished realm of yesterdays.

Down by the mill, beside the brook,
With a tangled line and a fishing hook,
Barefoot and happy the little boy strays
Over the paths of yesterdays.

Over the meadow and through the wood,
To the mossy bank where the old tree stood,
The little boy splashes the silver sprays,
In the dreamy stream of yesterdays.

In an old straw hat that belonged to pap,
And his pants held up with an old skate strap,
The little boy shouts by the bonfire's blaze,
And revels in joys of yesterdays.

Rolling around in the orchard grass
The little boy watches the honeybees pass
From tree to tree, where the blossoming sprays
Scent the warm spring air of yesterdays.

Oh, I long to go back to the yesterdays,
To the home I knew and the old pathways;
Back where the sunlight softly plays
On the golden days, the yesterdays.

Watermelon Time

De day was hot an' dusty
An' de ol' mule he was tia'd
An' up dar on de wagon
Uncle Douglas he puspiahed,
An' he kep' a grumblin', grumblin'
'Bout de hotness ob de day,
Say he don' know why de weathah
Keep a actin' dat a way.

Den he wipe his brow an' squinted
Down de roadway to de fence
On the Cunnel Johnson' prop'ty
Where de co'n fiel' it commence
An' see sompin' green an' shiny
Dar a hangin' on a vine,
An' he lift his head an' hollah
Dat its watah melon time.

An' he ain' do no mo' grumblin'
Des set right up an' sing
Lak de lark out in de medder
Er de robin in de spring.
Yassir, dat 'ere Uncle Douglas
Got ter feelin' mighty fine,
Cayse he know de time ob weathah
Was de watah melon time.

An' dat night, when de moonlight
Sort o' sneak behin' er cloud,
Uncle Douglas go a creepin'
Lak he feared ter walk out loud,
Where dem melons was a baskin'
In de coolness ob de dew,
An' he grab a great big feller
Underneaf his a'm an' flew,

Den Uncle Douglas squat down
In de shadder ob de co'n
An' he ain' feel so happy
Sence de day dat he was bo'n,
An' he whisper ter hisse'f like
As he bite down to de rine,
"Dey ain' no time ob weathah
Lak de watah melon time."

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